

PEDALS Tip Sheet: Observing SEL in Action in Home-Based Programs

(Connection , Reciprocity , Inclusion , Opportunities to Grow )

What to Notice During Observations

Connection: Building Deep Trust and Emotional Safety

Between Provider and Children:

- Frequent warm interactions: smiles, touch (when welcomed), encouragement
- Responding quickly and sensitively to children's emotional and physical needs
- Creating predictable routines that offer emotional security
- Using storytelling, songs, and rituals to strengthen bonds

Between Adults (Including Family Members or Assistants):

- Respectful, supportive communication between adults in the home
- Modeling calm problem-solving and positive emotional expression

With Families:

- Greeting parents warmly and sharing authentic, positive stories about their child
 - Building trusting partnerships through daily, personal conversations
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Reciprocity: Encouraging Back-and-Forth Communication

Between Provider and Children:

- Inviting children's ideas and choices during play and routines
- Listening carefully and responding thoughtfully to children's words, gestures, and behaviors
- Expanding conversations naturally during meals, play, or transitions

Between Adults:

- Collaborating on caregiving routines or problem-solving (if assistants or family are involved)

With Families:

- Encouraging family input about routines, developmental goals, and emotional needs
- Listening respectfully to concerns or suggestions



Inclusion: Creating a Place Where Every Child Feels They Belong

Between Provider and Children:

- Creating flexible participation options based on children's needs and moods
- Adapting activities for different developmental levels, languages, or sensory needs
- Celebrating cultural, linguistic, and individual diversity naturally within the home

Between Adults:

- Honoring different caregiving styles while centering the children's needs

With Families:

- Respecting family culture and language in daily care practices
- Including families in celebrations, routines, or projects based on their preferences

Opportunities to Grow: Supporting Emerging SEL and Learning Skills

Between Provider and Children:

- Encouraging independence during caregiving routines ("You zipped your coat yourself!")
- Supporting peer conflict resolution and emotional expression
- Offering gentle challenges that promote persistence and flexible thinking
- Highlighting strengths and growth daily through storytelling and positive narration

Between Adults:

- Reflecting together (when applicable) about what's working well and where growth is happening

With Families:

- Celebrating children's SEL milestones and offering ideas for continuing growth at home

Reflection Prompts for Leaders

🌀 Where did I see Connection , Reciprocity , Inclusion , and Growth  happening naturally throughout the day?

🌀 How did the provider create a home environment that made children feel safe, seen, and valued?

🌀 Were families invited into the SEL journey through daily conversation, celebration, or collaboration?

Important Reminders for Home-Based Settings

- Home-based providers often build family-like bonds with children — emotional security is the foundation for all learning.
- Authentic SEL moments often happen during caregiving routines (meals, diapering, cleanup, storytime).
- Flexibility and relationship-first caregiving are best practices — it's not about rigid lesson plans.
- Adult tone, patience, and responsiveness model emotional regulation in profound ways for young children.

"In home-based care, every interaction is an opportunity to build trust, belonging, resilience, and joy."